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Resources Agency Releases Plan to Combat Delta Smelt Decline

Science-Based Framework to Guide Partnership, Evaluate Progress in Identifying Causes for Pelagic Organism Decline and Promote Future Stability

Sacramento – The Resources Agency today released a 14-point science-based framework to address declines in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta's native fish species, including the delta smelt. The *Delta Smelt Action Plan* establishes a research-based, scientific approach to counteracting pelagic fish decline. These "open water" fish, including the delta smelt, are considered a key indicator of the health of the Delta ecosystem.

"The action plan combines the best work of scientists and policy makers in an effort to find answers to this decline," said Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman. "The threat facing the delta smelt could be a threat that impacts the entire health of the ecosystem. It is important that we do everything possible to find causes and provide recommendations to reverse the decline."

The plan was developed by the Resources Agency, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in response to several annual declines in specific estuarine pelagic fish populations. It includes actions to determine potential causes for the decline, and will evaluate the roles of pollutants and contaminants, invasive species, food chain disruptions, and state and federal water operations. As information becomes available through the science and research called for in the plan, the information will be made public.

"Our scientists will work to uncover the nature of what is happening to these fish and they will update the plan to incorporate our progress and discoveries," Chrisman said. "This document will guide us, but it will also evolve as we gain a better understanding of the causes for this decline."

Last year, state and federal scientists evaluating environmental conditions in the Delta and San Francisco Bay, as part of the Interagency Estuary Program (IEP), detected the sharp population declines. State and federal agencies have redirected their focus on the problem and DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation have increased IEP's budget by \$1.7 million to support research that will attempt to identify causes for the decline.

"The Delta Smelt Action Plan will serve a purpose that reaches far beyond protecting pelagic fish," said DFG Director Ryan Broddrick. "It will assist us in developing a science-based approach that will eventually improve the health of the Delta ecosystem and benefit all Californians."